Managing collaborative innovation in theory and practice

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Introduction
Western governments increasingly view innovation as a key element in enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of public governance (Borins, 2001; OECD, 2010). This growing interest in public innovation has triggered a debate among students of public governance and public decision makers about how to enhance innovation. While the NEW Public Management reform program saw entrepreneurial hierarchical leadership and competition as the main drivers of public as well as private innovation (Polsby, 1984; Osborne & Gaebler, 1993), recent strands of innovation theory and governance research view collaboration as a powerful and, in most cases, indispensable innovation driver (Teece, 1992; Edquist & Hommen, 1999; Mintrom, & Vergari, 1998; Glor, 2005; Nambisan, 2008; Eggers & Singh, 2009; Bommert, 2010; Hartley, Sorensen & Torfing, 2013). Collaboration between actors with different world views, resources and experiences can spur innovation because it triggers a destabilization of sedimented problem definitions, spur the development of new ideas, pool different kinds of resources necessary to realize and implement new ideas, and diffuse the innovation to relevant audiences (Sorensen & Torfing, 2011).

Although the emerging theories on collaborative innovation share the view that collaboration between public different authorities, as well as between public and private actors, hold a considerable potential for enhancing public innovation they also agree that there are many barriers to collaborative innovation. Overcoming these barriers call for innovation management and different researchers have identified a number of roles and functions that public authorities must play in order to promote successful collaborative innovation (Borins, 2001; Hartley, 2005; Eggers & Singh, 2009; Ansell & Gash, 2012). There are few studies, however, of how public administrators manage collaborative innovation processes in practice and to what extent and how they fulfill the required roles and functions. Studies of concrete management practices are valuable because they can inform efforts to qualify and guide the efforts of public authorities to promote public innovation through the management of collaboration.

The purpose of this paper is to clarify how public authorities manage collaborative innovation processes in practice as defined in theory, and to what extent they do so in accordance with the requirements sketched out in recent theories of collaborative innovation management. Furthermore, the paper aims to explain why the managers do as they do in order to identify important barriers that must be overcome in attempts to enhance public innovation through the management of collaborative innovation processes. The paper is structured as follows. First, we present a conceptual and analytical framework for analyzing management practices in relation to collaborative innovation processes. The framework identifies four roles or functions that those who manage collaborative innovation processes must serve. Then follow a presentation of the results of an ethnographic case study of to what extent and how six managers of collaborative neighborhood planning in the city of Copenhagen fulfill these roles. The paper concludes by pointing out some challenges that public authorities face when seeking to make the public sector more innovative through the management of collaborative innovation processes, and by suggesting how these challenges might be overcome.

Collaborative innovation as a strategy for developing the public sector
Public innovation is increasingly perceived as the appropriate answer to some of the current key challenges to public governance (OECD, 2010; Deloitte, 2011). We will mention four of these challenges. First, a severe fiscal crisis has puts serious constraints on Western governments’ ability to meet citizen demands. Politicians facing fiscal austerity view public innovation as an attractive
alternative to spending cuts that result in less public welfare (Hood, 2010; Deloitte 2012). Second public authorities face a growing number of wicked problems that can neither be solved by standard solutions nor by increasing the public funding of the existing measures (Rittel & Webber, 1973; Kooiman, 1993; Klijn & Koppenjan, 2004). A failure to solve wicked problems such as urban renewal, gang-related crime, unemployment, climate change and life style related illness signifies the need to develop new innovative measures that are more successful than the existing governance efforts. A third challenge that brings innovation on to the political agenda is a rise in policy execution problems that arise from the fact that political and administrative leaders make policies that are unable to solve the problems they address (Macmillan & Cain, 2010). The level of policy innovation is simply too low to be able to give competent and well informed answers to new policy challenges. Finally, it becomes increasingly apparent that the political institutions that have been established in the 19th and 20th Century are not designed to govern border crossing policy problems such as trafficking, terrorism, pandemics, financial instability, food safety and threats to the environment (Zürn, 2000; Djelic & Sahlin-Andersson, 2006; Enderlein et al., 2010). This situation calls for organizational innovations of the organizational set up through which government is produced. These four challenges indicate that there is a need for a broad variety of public innovations: innovations that enhance the efficiency of public service provision that makes it possible to produce more for less; innovation of new public services that solve wicked governance tasks more effectively; policy innovations that guide governance initiatives in a more qualified and informed way, and organizational and procedural innovations that recast the conditions under which policy making and service delivery takes place in light of changing governance tasks.

In clarifying how public innovation can contribute to overcome the above mentioned challenges we first need to define what we mean by public innovation. Taking departure in innovation theory (Schumpeter, 1950; Rogers, 1962; Edquist & Hommen, Rogers, 1999), public innovation can be defined as the formulation, realization and diffusion of new public policies and services and/or the practices, procedures and organizational forms through which they are provided (Halvorsen et al, 2005; Moore & Hartley, 2008; Agger & Sørensen, forthcoming). As such, public innovation can both lead to the identification of new government purposes and tasks and to the development of new and more efficient and effective ways of fulfilling them. Regardless of what is to be innovated, innovation involves different tasks that analytically, although not necessarily in practice, emerge in a certain order. The first task consists in a critical assessment and reformulation of the task at hand. Then follow the formulation of new and creative ideas regarding how to deal with the task, and a decision about what idea to pursue. The next task consists in realizing the idea through testing and experimentation, and when a solution is found the final job is to diffuse it to relevant actors (Eggers & Singh, 2009).

The focus on collaboration as a driver of public innovation is relatively new. Originally, public innovation was seen as an outcome of strong visionary political leaders (Polsby, 1984; Weber, 1978), but a heavy critique of the public sector for being ossified and innovative triggered a call for a less bureaucratic public sector (Downs, 1967). The desire to enhance the innovative capacity of the public sector was first launched by the founding fathers of the New Public Management (NPM) reform program that set out to make the public sector more dynamic by exchanging bureaucratic rules and regulation with competition and strong strategic leadership (Downs, 1967; Niskanen, 1987; Osborne & Gaebler, 1993). The New Public Governance (NPG) paradigm that were launched by governance researchers and policy makers in the late 1990 and 00’s, however, proposed a different and more collaborative innovation strategy (Osborne, 2010, 2013). Although NPG concurred that competition can motivate actors to engage in innovation, and strategic leadership can set innovation on the agenda in the public sector (Sørensen, 2012), the production of innovation itself is a product
of collaboration (Newman, Raine & Skelcher, 2001; Borins, 2001; Nambisan, 2008). Not least studies of the role of collaborative networks in public governance (Minstrom & Vergari, 1998; O’Toole, 1999; Powell & Grodal, 2004; Dente, Bobbio & Spada, 2005; Bland et al, 2008) show that collaboration between different public and private stakeholders can contribute to promoting all the above listed tasks faced by innovators. Collaboration can: 1) bring actors with different kinds of relevant knowledge and experiences to the table and thus provide those who set the innovation agenda with a better understanding of the problem; 2) produce disturbances in the decision makers’ sedimented world views and perceptions thereby pave the way for the formulation of new and creative ideas; 3) inform necessary choices between new ideas by involving many voices in making risk assessments; 4) engage those with relevant practical skills and knowledge in the experiments that leads to the realization of a new idea; and 4) mobilize many actors in diffusing successful innovations. By serving these functions collaboration can be seen as an indispensable driver of public innovation that takes over when actors have become motivated through competition and guided by hierarchical leadership (Hartley, Sørensen & Torfing, 2013).

Theorizing the management of collaborative innovation

Although NPG researchers view collaboration as an important innovation driver, they also recognize that successful collaborative innovation calls for management (Klijn & Koppenjan, 2004; Spillane, 2005; Damanpour & Schneider, 2008; Crosby & Bryson, 2010; Sørensen & Torfing, 2011; Ansell & Gash, 2012). Management is necessary in order to overcome certain barriers to collaboration. First barrier is when relevant key actors are not involved in the innovation process. In such situations the innovation manager must function as convener who ensures that all the relevant actors are brought to the table. Next barrier is that actors who are brought together are not always able to collaborate because of distrust, conflicts of interests or other issues. In this situation innovation managers must step into the role as collaboration facilitators that encourage the actors to work together despite different controversies by highlighting how the interdependency between the actors in relation to the problem at hand (Roberts & King, 1996; Agranoff, 2007; Ansell & Gash, 2007; Torfing et al, 2012). As a final barrier collaboration does not always lead to innovation. In case that the stakeholders agree to maintain status quo, the manager must function as a catalyst of change through a problematization of the present and a visualization of possible futures (Gray, 1989; Sørensen, 2013). Based on the above need for management of collaborative innovation, and following Chris Ansell and Alison Gash’s (2012) typology of collaborative forms of innovation management we can now define management of collaborative innovation in the public sector as the convening, facilitation and catalyzation of collaborative innovation processes that involve relevant and affected public and private actors in a shared attempt to formulate, realize and diffuse new public policies and services and/or the practices, procedures and organizational forms through which they are provided. In order to fulfill these functions, managers of collaboration must take on four roles: The Pilot, the Whip, the Culture-Maker, and the Communicator. As explicated in table 1 these management roles are relevant in all the different stages of the innovation process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task definition</th>
<th>Pilot</th>
<th>Whip</th>
<th>Culture-Maker</th>
<th>Communicator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Propose a task that sets an overall direction</td>
<td>Create incentives that encourage problematization of state of the art</td>
<td>Clarify that it is fully acceptable to highlight unsolved problems</td>
<td>Propose a task in ways that appeal to the relevant stakeholders</td>
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<td><strong>Idea formulation</strong></td>
<td>Involve relevant stakeholders, and design arenas that promote critical reflection between them</td>
<td>Celebrate actors who are creative and take risks</td>
<td>Set a norm that differences between actors is a driver of innovation not a barrier</td>
<td>Translate between stakeholders with different experiences and perceptions of the task</td>
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<td><strong>Decision-making</strong></td>
<td>Remind decision makers of what the task is, and list different options</td>
<td>Convince the participants of the need to make choices</td>
<td>Canonize the ability to make hard choices as the road to success</td>
<td>Reformulate conflicts into dilemmas that can be balanced and settled</td>
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<td><strong>Realization</strong></td>
<td>Maintain focus on the selected idea</td>
<td>Evaluate to what extent ideas were realized</td>
<td>Visualize that implementation is a decisive and creative phase in the innovation process</td>
<td>Orchestrate an ongoing dialogue between those who develop and decide innovative ideas and those who implement</td>
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<td><strong>Diffusion</strong></td>
<td>Activate the participants’ networks in spreading information about the innovation</td>
<td>Create events where evaluations are presented to relevant audiences</td>
<td>Commit the participants to function as ambassadors</td>
<td>Brand the innovation in ways that are appealing to relevant audiences</td>
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Table 1. Four roles for managers of collaborative innovation

As *Pilot* the manager must give an overall direction to the collaborative innovation process. The job is to define the purpose of the collaboration process, convene relevant stakeholders, organize the activities, keep focus on outcomes and activate all available resources in diffusing the outcome. The *Whip* is important when actors are reluctant to participate in or contribute to the collaborative endeavors at different stages in the innovation process. Since direct force rarely accommodates collaborative innovation, the manager must revert to designing positive and negative incentives and other forms of soft-power that commit actors to engage in collaborative innovation process (Nye, 2004). It is also essential that managers serve as *Culture-Makers* who institutionalize a set of norms and values that celebrate actors who engage in collaborative innovation. As culture is more clearly signaled through action than through preaching, an important strategy for Culture-Makers is to function as role models that do not only talk the talk but also walks the walk (Lockwood, Jordan & Kunda, Z., 2002). Finally, managers must function as *Communicators*. In multi-actor governance processes it is always a challenge to obtain the level of communication that makes it possible for a group of actors to carry out a focused and meaningful discussion, to make and execute well-informed collective decisions, and to explain the decisions and diffuse outcomes to the outside world. The role as communicator involves a good deal of what Williamson denote ‘boundary spanning’ between different actors and perspectives (Williamson, 2002).

Each of the four roles highlights a management function that is important for the advancement of collaborative innovation. Sometimes one or more of the involved stakeholders has the capacity and will to serve one or more of these functions, but in the case that they do not, it is a task for the public authorities. Therefore it is essential, that they designate the task of managing collaborative innovation processes to one or more innovation managers, and to ensure that all the management tasks outlined above are carried out. If one or more of the tasks are systematically left out it can
seriously hamper the collaborative innovation process. Systematic tendencies to give priority to some functions and overlook others can be caused by a path dependent persistence of traditional role images or the organizational culture in a specific policy area or public institution.

Managers at all levels in the public sector have a crucial role to play in serving the four management roles. Although their tasks overlap it can at a general level be said that top managers design the institutional conditions for performing of collaborative innovation at lower levels in the organization, while lower-level managers orchestrate the concrete interaction between different actors. Although top managers thus play an important role in conditioning collaborative innovation, the role as manager of such processes is most intensively played out by lower-level managers who are directly engaged in exercising the four roles described above on a day to day basis. For the purpose of this paper we have therefore conducted a study of the management practices of six lower-level managers who are specifically assigned the job to promote urban development in Copenhagen by encouraging local stakeholders to engage in shared attempts to create a new future for their neighborhood. As we shall see, the study illuminates how public managers take on the role as managers of collaborative innovation in practice in light of path-dependent role perceptions and the larger organizational culture they are part of. Furthermore, the study reveals some of the challenges and problems they encounter in the process, and how they seek to deal with them.

A case of collaborative innovation: Urban regeneration in Copenhagen

Within the last decade, collaborative innovation between different public authorities as well as between public and private actors has played a central role in urban regeneration policies in Europe. This approach to urban regeneration is among other things visible in the Area-Based-Initiatives (ABI’s). Their main purpose is to involve not only different public actors but also local stakeholders in innovative neighbourhood renewal in large cities. Each ABI is headed by an administrative leader who is employed by the municipality of Copenhagen to initiate and manage local collaboration processes (Agger & Norvig 2011). A case study of the way the seven leaders practice their leadership role can inform our knowledge about how collaborative innovation processes in urban regeneration are managed.

In Copenhagen the first ABIs were established in the middle of the 1990s. Inspiration came from UK and The Netherlands (Atkinson, 2008), and this inspiration contributed to shifting the Danish urban renewal policies from being mainly concentrated on housing refurbishment of single buildings or groups of buildings in larger cities towards a more integrated approach that saw urban regeneration as a matter of developing local neighbourhoods both with regard to housing and other local conditions and activities. This neighbourhood approach demanded for increased coordination between the different municipal administrations and political committees. Furthermore, it saw extensive participation of local citizens and stakeholders as a necessary condition for success (Andersen and Leather, 1999). The task given to the ABIs and in particular to their leaders is to promote horizontal collaboration between the local stakeholders in pursuit of new innovative solutions to local problems. Among the local problems that call for horizontal collaborative innovation are vandalism, crime and pollution, and to improve public safety, infra-structure and standard of housing. A just as important task for the leaders however, is to ensure coherence between the policies pursued by the different governance departments and the local activities. This task relates to the fact that the ABIs are lowest level in a larger municipal management structure. The ABI’s were initially under the jurisdiction of the Department of Finance, which operates directly
under the Mayor of Copenhagen, but today it is part of the Department of Technique and Environment.

This study maps the leadership practices of seven leaders of ABI’s located in deprived neighbourhoods (Haraldsgade; Sundholskvarteret; Sankt Kjelds kvarter; Husum; Valby; Vesterbro & Fuglekvarteret). The ABIs operate in a period from 5-7 years, and the ones under scrutiny in this study were established between 2007 and 2011 and are thus currently up and running. The number of staff varies between 6-12 persons employees, among which some are typically architects; journalists or a degree involving communication; geographers or an interdisciplinary degree of urban planning (For more information see www.kk.dk). According to the job description the role of the leaders is to function as secretary for the steering committee, govern according to the budget, and guide the everyday operations of the staff and the many sub-leaders who are responsible for the individual projects that are financed by the ABI. Typical projects are: establishment of local community centres with facilities for sports activities and cultural events. There are also projects aiming to improve recreational spaces such as parks and other green areas, and solve problems with traffic among which count reduction of traffic in residential areas, or reorganization of parking facilities. Each ABI are headed by a Steering Committee composed of representatives from local resident networks, NGOs, sports and culture associations and, in some cases, also a neighborhood board. All strategies and projects passes through the Steering Committee, before they are passed on to approval first by the administrative staff at the City Hall and finally by the Municipal Council.

The 5-7 year life span of the ABIs is divided into three phases: idea generation; implementation; anchoring. These phases follow more or less the stages and progression of innovation processes as described by innovation theory although not all of the stages are included. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the ABI leaders are faced with the task to manage a collaborative innovation process through the different stages described in table 1. The collaborative definition of tasks, the generation of new creative ideas, decision making regarding what ideas to pursue, implementation of the ideas, and the diffusion and anchorage of the new innovations in relevant audiences. The question to be answered by the empirical analysis is: how do they serve this function in practice.

**Method**

The empirical data are collected through a comprehensive ethnographic case study of how seven leaders of urban neighbourhood regeneration centres in Copenhagen manage collaborative innovation processes. The data collection was carried out between September 2012 and August 2013 by Annika Agger. The data consisted of piles of documents that provide knowledge about the formal tasks and objectives of the ABIs and more informal documents that contain knowledge about the ongoing activities in the ABI. It also included in depth interviews with the seven leaders, including a focus group workshop. The larger bulk of the data, however, consisted of participant observations of meetings, and seminars, and the shadowing of the leaders over a full day of 12 hours. The shadowing took place on the day that they participated in an evening meeting with the Steering Committee in order to see how they communicated with the representatives from local organizations and citizens and the municipal departments.

Shadowing is a technique, where the researcher follows a person through their working day (Czarniawska 2008). The technique is rather new within public administration studies (Rhodes et al., 2007; van Hulst et al., 1978 Merlijn, 2012) but it is more common in sociology and organizational
studies. Shadowing a person provides knowledge that is not easy to capture through other research methods. Shadowing the urban regeneration leaders, provided knowledge about how the leaders act and interact in different contexts, and to observe how other actors engage with the leader. What management strategies and techniques are in use and to what effect? This can be seen at observations at meetings and seminars but shadowing gives the researcher the opportunity to see what goes on between the more organized interaction arenas. Notes were taken throughout the day, and at the end of the day reflections were written down. At some of the observed meetings transcriptions were made simultaneously. All the written material is later coded with the theoretical analytical perspectives presented in this article.

A focus group workshop was organized in order to initiate a discussion among the leaders about how they dealt with different challenges relating to the management of the horizontal collaboration processes as well as the vertical interaction with the City Hall. This provided important knowledge about the challenges that confront them all and how they chose to deal with them in different ways. The focus group interview will be supplemented by a round of individual interviews that will be carried out in the autumn 2013. These interviews will give the leaders an opportunity to describe how they view their own practice and the events that have been shadowed. Interviews are a valuable supplement to the data that gives an impression of the role perceptions that condition the way the leaders act in different practices.

Managing collaborative innovation in practice

In this section we investigate to what extent and how the seven leaders manage the collaborative innovation processes in accordance with the four roles in table 1. The purpose is not to assess the management profile of the individual managers, but to look for and explain general patterns in the way they approach the task in this particular policy context in order to see if they tend to focus on some management tasks rather than others, to consider why this might be the case, and to discuss what the implications of a systematic exclusion of certain tasks might be for the enhancement of collaborative innovation in urban regeneration.

The Pilot

The role as pilot, which is the one of the four management roles that comes closest to the traditional roles as classical bureaucrat and strategic manager, is exercised by most of the leaders of the ABIs. This is particularly the case for those who are recruited from the central municipal administration. They view the ABIs as the lowest level in the municipal hierarchy and themselves as ambassadors for the City Hall. Therefore, they put a considerable emphasis on ensuring that the local collaborative innovation endeavors are in line with municipal policies and guidelines. The role as pilot is also emphasized in the leader’s job descriptions as well as in the description of the aims of the ABIs. Here, it is emphasized that it it’s the role of the leader to be responsible for the daily operation of the local secretariat and for securing that there is progression in the projects. The leader and the staff should support and help the local actors and in particular the local steering committee in realizing their ideas in concrete projects. The role as pilot is, however, complicated by the fact that the whole purpose of the ABI is to mobilize local actors. This purpose is taken very seriously by all the leaders. This is envisaged by their ambitions and intensive efforts to involve the local public institutions as well as a wide variety of formal and informal networks in the neighborhoods. They also experiment intensively with new methods of citizen participation and involvement of local residents. This strong ‘participatory’ and ‘deliberative’ ethos among the ABI leaders and ABI staffs is clearly expressed in
their words as well as in their practices. Hence, observations at the steering committee meetings showed that the leaders made an effort to underline that the participants had a say. This was illustrated in statements like ‘it is your project! – You can decide! – It is up to you!’ where the “you” referred to the participating local stakeholders. It was a constant challenge for the pilots who saw themselves as ambassadors of the central municipal administration to ensure that the activities were in line with the overall goals set by the municipality. It was also sometimes difficult to function as pilot because it was hard to keep track of these overall goals, because the goals were sometimes vague, or because the different administrations did not have the same goals.

A few of the leaders did not, however, to the same extent and in the same way as those with a background in the central administration identify with the role as pilot. Those who were recruited from elsewhere primarily saw themselves as ambassadors for the neighborhood. This self-perception was expressed in the internal seminars, where some of the leaders emphasized that they performed a kind of ‘place based leadership’. By this notion they meant that their point of departure of their work was to secure that it was the local resident who decided the agenda and prioritized the ABI projects. Also phrases of ‘bottom up’ leadership where articulated in that context.

In the dialog below we can identify the urban leaders’ different interpretations of what their work is about. Person A expresses some perspectives that come close to the role of the pilot whereas person B tends to emphasize the role of the communicator. Finally, there are some aspects of the whip in the quotes from person C. The quotes illustrate that there is room for different interpretations of the role of the urban leaders. The deliberation took place at an internal meeting among the 7 leaders and addressed their aim of their work:

- Person A: Our staff has to stand for and represent the same attitudes as our municipal department. That is the frames we operate within – and we are employed!
- Person B: We are translators of these frames- the better we are to read the political frames- the more we can accomplish
- Person C: I think that we make some kind of manipulation – when we coach our steering committee
- Person A: Manipulation is a negative word – there is a difference whether you steer or create conflict. It is about making a good discussion paper or proposal!
- Person B: It is not manipulation it is facilitation or process work. The central thing is that we involve citizens because we want to create value for the citizens not because we have our own agenda!

Transcriptions made by one of the authors at a meeting 29 may 2013.

In sum it can be said that the role as pilot was a central part of the job description and played a significant role in the practices of many although all the leaders. Their main focus was on mobilizing local actors to contribute to realizing municipal goals. The main challenge was when local actors had other goals, and to keep track of the goals and policies pursued by different parts of the municipal administration.
The Whip

The leaders in the ABIs do not practice the role as whip very much. However, it is possible to identify actions and modes of leading that correlate with the characteristics of the whip. In the internal seminars, we discussed the main functions of the ABIs and each leader presented a story that characterized their way of working. Some expressed the main function to be *to leave the neighborhood with less physical and social problems, to secure that the citizens a better life and to put action behind the good intentions.* Two of the stories that were told addressed some old entrenched conflicts among local actors in the neighborhood, and how they as a ‘free player’ in the ABIs could convince the involved actors about the need to make choices and the synergy that could be created by collaborating. Despite some initial suspicion they succeeded in creating local partnerships between previously opposing actors. In one of the cases a public park was created in a lot owned by a common housing association. In the other case a local culture activity center was established. The strategies applied were a hard insistence on that value of collaboration, the ability to thereby more easily attract external resources and actually accomplish visible projects. This was carried out in acts such as repeating the potential gains by collaborating; reformulating conflicts into challenges, articulating actions that could get the projects moving. The leaders operate in neighborhoods were the level of conflicts or collaboration among local actors and networks is very different. In some of the ABI located in neighborhoods in the inner city there is a long tradition of local political action. Therefore, conflicts among different local party politics are easily transferred in to the deliberations about the aim and projects of the ABI. In particular in one of the neighborhoods there were severe conflicts among citizens representing the party of ‘The Red Green alliance’ that have got the majority of seats in the local steering committee and the urban regeneration leader that where public known for being a member of a the ‘Socialists Peoples Party’. Although, he made an effort to act as a *whip* and tried to convince the actors about the necessity of making choices and seeking progression, he was finally replaced by a person from the central municipal office.

One of the attributes of the *whip* is their focus on ‘getting things done’ and to seek ‘progression’. Observations from the shadowing as well as the diverse meetings, demonstrate a main part of the work of the urban leaders is related to networking and the creation of partnerships. There seems to be a great frustrations about that it is difficult to ‘document’ or asses these types of capacity building. One of the authors introduced the concept of ‘linking social capital’ that seemed to make a lot of sense to the involved in that it captured a lot of the work they did of networking and making connections between local actors and municipal departments and services.
Summing up, we could identify that the role function of the whip was present and carried out of few of the urban leaders. This was in particular those who operated in some of the neighborhoods with a high level of local conflicts. A potential explanation of why the role of the whip is not so present among the majority of the urban leaders is that it involves a high degree of insisting and courage to enter escalated conflicts. So, there is a need for both courage and conflict resolutions skills in order to seek progression.

The Culture-Maker
All the leaders are dedicated Culture-Makers, although they are so in varying degrees. Observations at the internal seminars demonstrate that there is a common perception about that the way of working of the ABIs represent a ‘novel and innovative way’ of developing public service. There are two challenges that are mentioned in several occasions. One is the ABI and the relationship to the other municipal departments. Although the different municipal departments have a seat in the local steering committee of the ABI they often exert a low rate of commitment to the projects of the ABIs. All the urban leaders agreed upon the need for improvement of the internal connection between the ABI and the different municipal departments. Some of the discussions addressed how can we as ABI make a difference for the other municipal departments? The role of the Culture-Maker comes into function in that all the urban leaders found it necessary to work with the norms and culture that surrounded the collaborations between the different municipal departments as well as in their own department. Lack of recognition of working with an integrated approach and in close contact with citizens and local stakeholders is an issue that concerns all the leaders. An example of this is for example the establishment of a Youth Centre in one of the neighborhoods. This project was high on the agenda for the local residents that experienced many problems with vandalism. The response from the ABI’s own administration (Technical & Environmental department (TMF)) was: “What does this have to do with the agenda for our department?” Several of the urban leaders stated that they do not see themselves as representatives from the TMF – but rather from the municipality as a whole (Seminar IV, 10 January 2013).
The other challenge is the relationship to the local actors. The Culture-Maker function is played out in relation to relation building in the neighborhood. This is done by deliberately reaching our and contact local stakeholders and by arranging meetings and facilitating partnerships among different networks (e.g. local institutions; residents around a certain park; citizens with a common interest in promoting culture etc.). The fieldwork demonstrated that the leaders were very aware of creating an acknowledging and warm atmosphere at the meetings with citizens. In several of the steering committee meetings it was observed that the leaders praised the participants for their effort or giving positive comments of a new haircut or the like. We can identify to patterns in how the Culture-Maker role function is performed in relation to the local actors. Some explain their work with phrases like ‘it is about empowerment’ whereas others claim that ‘it is about efficiency’. The common denominator is that both approaches aims to cultivate norms of collaboration and novel ways of collaborating both internally as well as externally. In terms of diffusion, the data indicate that rather than committing the participants in the different collaborations to act as ambassadors, they rather act as ambassadors themselves.

At the seminars we talked about what was the core mission of the ABIs. Some of the statements come close to the role function that we have described as the culture – maker.

The mission of the ABIs is to:
- Cultivate local resources and empower the local citizens to be ambassadors for their neighborhood!
- Get the citizens to take responsibility and care for their neighborhood and to become proud of their community!
- It is not about citizen involvement – but about ‘municipal department involvement’. Our way of working is integrated and goes across the municipal vertical silos. We work horizontally!

Criteria for success of the ABIs’ is to:
- create local arenas where friendship among the local residents can grow
- contribute to create trust and credibility
- don’t take part in conflicts!
- mobilize networks and facilitate resources

Summing up, the Culture-Maker interpreted as someone who seeks to promote norms of collaboration is very much present among all the seven leaders. Nonetheless, the argumentation diverge between if the rationale behind is efficiency or democratic empowerment. In particular three of the leaders, values the democratic capacity building, and articulate their role as being spokesperson for neighborhoods that did not previously had a voice.

The Communicator
Compared to the other management roles, the communicator has a strong focus on process and the creation of meaningful discussion for the involved participant that can lead to the execution of well-informed collective decisions. Another aspect is a focus on explaining and legitimizing decisions to the outside world. As in the role of the pilot the communicator role involves aspects of ‘boundary spanning’ between different actors and perspectives. But the where the aim of the pilot is to produce
outcome and secure implementation the communicator is more oriented at securing a legitimate and qualified process by communicating to the ‘outside’ world – as well as ‘internally’ by orchestration processes of dialogue and by reformulating conflicts. The empirical data illuminate that the communicator role is not widely performed by all but two of the leaders. It is not, that they don’t value communication, but this function is easily drowned in the everyday bureaucracy operations. Communication, and facilitation of processes, and the branding of the ABIs in the neighborhood is among all the leaders considered to be of uttermost value. As a consequence, many of the ABIs secretaries have employed people with a professional background in communication. All the ABIs are well known for their experimentation of innovative methods of involving citizens and in many instances accomplish to reach out groups that are often not present in public meetings e.g. children, youth, immigrants, busy families or homeless people. In order to make the ABI visible in the neighborhoods there are signs and banners based in front of the local ABI office. In some of the ABI, they aim to find a strong narrative to feed to the local newspaper every week. Some of the more novel initiatives is that face book is used as a media to generate local deliberation and as a channel to disseminate information. Visibility in the neighborhood is also promoted through arrangements of local expositions, festivals, or social gatherings in the common public spaces e.g. parks or school yards. In one of the neighborhoods a girls’ drummer majorette paraded through the community to call attention upon the ABI and their summer feast. The social gatherings are used as a first step to draw attention towards the different possibilities for local action that can be supported and facilitated by the ABIs. The communicator role is in particular taken up by one of the urban leaders, who have acted as the driver of the initiation of both a seminar on ‘storytelling from the ABI’ for the internal staff en all the municipal departments, and a national conference on ‘Living communities – created by the ABI’ that will take place in September 2013. The intention is, to brand the way of working of the ABIs’ that is considered by the leaders to be a ‘tool’ to produce social cohesion, efficient public service, and better qualities in the urban space.

At one of the seminars we talked about the need of branding the ABI – and on how stories about how the ABIs’ worked, and how they created new qualitative urban spaces and how they contributed to raise the collective acting capabilities in the neighborhoods. The dialogue below shows some of the considerations that the urban leaders have in regards to communication.

Person A: *We have to think in terms of “story telling”*
Person B: *We need to be better to tell about what we do and how we do it – Fake it till you make it. We tend to blame the other departments – but we should make some exemplary projects that goes across the municipal departments.*
Transcriptions made a seminar II, 8 October 2012.

Summing up, the need for communication is acknowledged by all the seven leaders, but it does not play any central role in practice. It is mainly the ABI staff that operates as *communicators* in the day to day operation of services. Novel media tools, such as face book, twitter, seems to be able to support the role of the communicator and in particular in the reaching out groups that are interested in following the ABI but do not prioritize to attend meetings or working groups. The leaders expressed a need for branding the ABIs and their way of working in the municipality and abroad.
Discussion and Conclusion
The intention of this article was to get a better understanding of how public authorities manage collaborative innovation processes in practice. In doing so we developed a typology consisting of four management roles that each had an important function for the promotion of collaborative innovation at different stages in the innovation process. We confronted this theoretical management model with the practices of leaders of collaborative innovation processes in urban regeneration in Copenhagen. This group of leaders was relevant in this context because they are placed in a situation where their main objective is to promote collaboration not only between public and private actors but also between different public authorities.

The empirical analysis shows that the leaders are primarily stepping into the roles as pilot and culture-maker. The role as pilot is the one that is highlighted in the job description and it points to the need to establish a strong vertical link between the different administrations at the City Hall and the local projects and other activities. While most of them are top-down pilots that aim align the local activities with goals set by central municipal authorities the group also contains a number of bottom-up pilots who seek to influence the central authorities to follow the same direction as the local stakeholders. The top-down pilots tends to have a prior carrier in the central administration, while the bottom-up pilots are former local project leaders and activists. While the former group faces problems when the goals set by central authorities are unknown, unclear or contradictory, the latter group faces problems when the central authorities show little responsiveness towards local strategies and ambitions.

The role as culture-manager seems to suit all of the leaders equally well. This probably has to do with the fact that the general culture in the area of urban regeneration policy in Copenhagen is celebrating a collaborative and participatory approach to public governance that was born in the 1970s and has stayed on ever since. All of the leaders seek to promote a norm of collaboration and inclusion of all the local actors among the participating actors in order to include as many actors as possible and to promote as high a degree of shared decision making and action as possible. A line can be drawn, however, between those who promote a collaborative and participatory culture that place central municipal actors as a part of the collaboration process and those who view them as a constitutive enemy in relation to the local participatory collaboration processes.

The seven leaders only to a very limited extent take on the roles as whip and communicator. The role as whip, which involves the strategic and instrumental use of soft forms of power such as positive and negative incentives, does not seem to fit into the leadership imaginary of lower-level managers in urban regeneration. The leaders are equally uncomfortable with the role as communicator, which they tend to delegate to their local staff.

As a final observation it can be said that most of the leaders tend to be more engaged in the early stages in the innovation process than in the latter phases of the process. Hence, the focus on realization and diffusion of project outcomes etc. is limited. Although this might have something to do with the fact that the ABIs under scrutiny are still not in the final part of the 5-7 years phase that should focus on anchorage, it is striking that there is very little focus on the tasks that pilots, whips, culture-makers and communicators do in the realization and diffusion phase. This can again be explained by governance culture among street level employees in urban regeneration policies in Copenhagen that tends to be more interested in process than in outcomes.
What are the implications of these conclusions? We do not claim that managers of collaborative innovation processes must necessarily play all the four roles presented in Table 1 but we argue that the four roles can be used as a heuristic tool to measure the strengths and weaknesses of the management of collaborative innovation processes exercised in a given context. Seen from this perspective there is a good deal to learn about how lower-level managers in urban renewal policy can strengthen their management practices. First it can be said that their reluctance to take on the role as Whip is problematic because it means that the managers do not use all the tools available to them in their effort to activate relevant and affected stakeholders in collaborative innovation processes. Moreover, it is costly for them to only to a very limited degree take on the role as communicator because it limits their ability to enhance mutual understanding and dialogue between central public authority and local actors as well as between different local stakeholders. Although the role as whip and communicator can to some extent be delegated to other actors, e.g. central public authorities or the staff at the ABI, the ABI managers could improve their management capacity consistently by taking on these roles. Finally, an increased focus on the realization and diffusion phase of collaborative innovation processes could accomplish higher success rates in the outcomes of the innovation processes.

References


LINKS

Municipality of Copenhagen – and their urban integrated renewal projects: